



News Release

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Hang up and drive — to cut your risk of a car crash

OLYMPIA — Everyone agrees most deaths and disabilities from car crashes are preventable. Most are caused by human error — decisions drivers make that increase their risk of crashing. A new law aims to prevent these types of collisions by ticketing drivers not using a hands-free device while on a cell phone.

Distracted driving is a huge problem in Washington and across the country. Speeding, drinking or taking drugs and then driving, showing off, and talking or texting on a cell phone are all very risky when behind the wheel. Using a cell phone or texting while driving is as dangerous as driving impaired by alcohol or other drugs.

“One life lost to distracted driving is one too many,” says Secretary of Health Mary Selecky. “Choose to use your cell phone when it’s safe, not when you’re behind the wheel.”

About 5,000 people a year in the U.S. are killed in cell phone-related crashes. Another 500,000 are seriously injured or disabled. The new law that starts June 10 gives drivers another reason to make better decisions and protect their own health and safety, and that of others on the road.

Deciding not to text or talk on a cell phone while driving will help drivers focus on the road and reduce the risk of crashing. It’s easy to get caught up in a conversation and miss something that happens quickly, and before you know it you are in a crash.

Reduce your risk for crashes by parking your cell phone and waiting to talk or text when you’re stopped in a safe place or at home. Taking that little extra time may save months in hospitals, and other medical care facilities, and may even save your life or others. Do all you can do to reduce the risk — it’s definitely worthwhile.

—More—

Stop distracted driving

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The Washington State Department of Health joins the [Washington State Patrol](#) (www.wsp.wa.gov/information/releases/2010_archive/mr051410b.htm), [Washington State Department of Licensing](#) (www.dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/distracteddriving.html), [Washington Traffic Safety Commission](#) (<http://www.texttalkticket.com>), AAA-Washington, and others to promote the new law.

Think about what happens in a serious automobile crash — someone calls 9-1-1, EMS teams respond to remove you from the crashed car, they stabilize you, stop bleeding, and take you to a trauma center, like Seattle's Harborview. There, doctors and nurses work quickly to save your life, your brain, or other organs. If you live, you may be in intensive care for weeks, in rehabilitation for weeks or months, you may be off work for a long time, or unable to go back to the home you knew. Your life can truly change in an instant. And the same things may happen to the other driver.

The state Department of Health's [Injury and Violence Prevention Program](#) (www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/emstrauma/injury) works to protect and improve the health of people in Washington by reducing intentional and unintentional injuries and violence. More information about the program is available on the state health department's Web site.

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Visit the Washington Department of Health Web site at http://www.doh.wa.gov for <i>a healthy dose of information</i> .
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